

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DUBLIN 01600 051546Z

46

ACTION EUR-25

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TAGS: PBOR, PINT, EI

SUBJ: DUBLIN REGRETS WHITELAW DEPARTURE

1. ALL DUBLIN NEWSPAPERS REGRETTED DEPARTURE OF WILLIAM WHITELAW FROM NI JOB. A MAJOR THEME WAS THAT HIS REMOVAL SO SOON BEFORE IMPORTANT TRIPARTITE CONFERENCE SHOWED THAT PM HEATH STILL DID NOT ATTACH HIGHEST PRIORITY TO SETTLEMENT OF "IRISH QUESTION." NO WRITER HAD BAD WORD FOR WHITELAW HIMSELF, HOWEVER. NO RECENT ENGLISH POLITICIAN HAS ACHIEVED SUCH HIGH LEVEL OF RESPECT IN THE REPUBLIC. EVEN WRITERS WHO HAVE OFTEN DISAGREED WITH WHITELAW CONCEDE THAT HE IS REMARKABLE STATESMAN WHO HAS DEVOTED FULL ENERGIES TO IRISH PROBLEM. CURRENT POLITICAL SOLUTION TO NORTHERN TROUBLES IS OMETIMES DESCRIBED AS "WHITELAW'S MIRACLE." ONE COLUMNIST, THE RESPECTED "BACKBENCHER" IN IRISH TIMES, THINKS WHITELAW HAS STARTED REUNIFICATION OF IRELAND: "IT TOOK A BLOODY ENGLISHMAN, WITHOUT A GUN, TO DO THE WOLFE TONE (REPUBLICAN) BIT IT WAS ALWAYS ON THE CARDS THAT WHOEVER WOULD UNITE US IT SURE AS HELL WOULD NOT BE ONE OF OUR OWN*"

2. GOI CONTACTS ARE ALMOST OUT OF TOUCH DURING FRANTIC LAST-MINUTE PREPARATIONS FOR TRIPARTITE CONFERENCE. FROM ASSORTED
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PAGE 02 DUBLIN 01600 051546Z

RUMBLINGS, HOWEVER, WE GATHER THAT GOI IS UPSET BY DEPARTUE OF

WHITELAW AT THIS CRITICAL TIME. ON NOV 30 -- FEW HOURS BEFORE FIRST
LEAKS OF HIS REMOVAL -- GOVT HAD NOT BEEN INFORMED. FONOFF TOLD
US WHITELAW WAS INDISPENSABLE AS LEADER OF BRITISH NEGOTIATING
TEAM (DUBLIN 1584). ONE CONTACT THINKS HEATH USED THIS METHOD
TO SHOW HIS DISPLEASURE AT IRISH REFUSAL TO WITHDRAW NI
"TORTURE" CASE IN STRASBOURG.

3. ONLY PROVO IRA IS PLEASED BY WHITELAW'S DEPARTURE. THEY TERM
IT "GOOD RIDDANCE." ATTEMPT TO NEGOTIATE WITH PROVOS IS STILL
MOST CONTROVERSIAL EPISODE OF WHITELAW'S IRISH CAREER. SOME
OBSERVERS CONSIDER IT BLUNDER; AND OTHERS (INCLUDING EMBASSY)
LOOK ON IT AS A RISK THAT HAD TO BE TAKEN.

4. COMMENT: WHITELAW'S FEAT WAS TO HELP FIGHTING IRISH
COMMUNITIES TO ADTOP ONLY SANE PATH AWAY FROM VIOLENCE. SINCE MEN
OF MODERATION ON ALL SIDES AGREED THAT THERE WAS NO OTHER PATH,
AND SINCE MANY WORKED HARD TO FOLLOW IT, WHITELAW'S FEAT DOES NOT
QUITE DESERVE TO BE CALLED A MIRACLE. BUT IT WAS A POLITICAL
MASTERPIECE. QUESTION NOW IS WHETHER PACKAGE CAN BE COMPLETED
AND THEN IMPLEMENTED SUCCESSFULLY IN HIS ABSENCE. WE THINK THERE
IS STILL ROOM FOR CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM, BUT THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT
A POWERFUL POSITIVE FACTOR HAS BEEN REMOVED. SORENSON

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